

RESEARCH PAPER

'Learning to be More Human': Perspectives of Respect by Young Irish People in Prison

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Abstract: *Respect is a fundamental aspect of how human beings relate to each other and, arguably, is a significant factor in the relationship between student and teacher. For incarcerated adults, the relationships they foster with their teachers (and by extension the respect or disrespect cultivated within it) often have a considerable impact on their educative development. This research explores how respect, and disrespect, is perceived to be communicated within prison education by 13 students and 13 teachers in an Irish Young Offenders institution. The values at the core of prison educators' practice and their capacity to promote self-respect within their students emerged as central to this cultivation of respect. The place of socialisation within these educative relationships also emerged as a prominent factor and is discussed in relation to MacMurray's (2012) assertion that the primary function of education is 'learning to be human'.*

Keywords: *Respect; educative relationship; self-respect; rehabilitation.*

This article explores the practice of respect within prison education. It aspires to answer the questions: - how is respect communicated between a teacher and young Irish people in prison? And what are the educative implications for rehabilitation in such an institution? This research is based on interviews with young Irish people in prison and their teachers about how they believe respect is practiced and how it shapes the educative nature of prison education. Initially, a review of the pertinent literature details how respect can be conceived of, particularly within an educative relationship, and its distinctive importance for prison education. The methodology of this research is detailed examining the selection of participants and the ethical issues surrounding this study. The findings from this study are explored through the perceptions of pupils', and teachers', manifestation of respect and the effect that respect has on their learning experiences. The significance of the social aspects of prison education and the place of self-respect within prison education are then discussed in light of these findings.

Literature Review

Respect

Respect is a fundamental aspect of how human beings relate to each other. Respect between people can be thought of as the esteem paid by one human being to another; however, the object of this esteem is the focus of much academic debate (Darwall, 1977, 2006). It could be esteem based on cultural norms, or even fear of others; however, the most common debates about the focus of respect centre on a person's dignity (Kant, 1855; Darwall, 2006). For clarity, the definition of respect as understood by this study relies on Hoban's (1977) conception as 'an openness to others, esteem for others because of their human decency and the degree of excellence of their performance' (p.232).

The social importance of respect and self-respect

A person may feel respected if he is esteemed by others; however, the focus on a person's dignity has also been argued as primary importance for one to feel truly respected (Kant, 1855; Darwall, 2006). Historically the conception of respect between people has been the subject of vigorous debate, the most prominent centring around the work of Kant (1855) who advanced the position that respect should be predicated on the innate dignity of human beings. This conception of respect was considered to be reciprocal in nature for if



a person claims to have their dignity respected then they must afford a similar right to others (Kant (1855). Therefore, emerging from the debate of respect based on the inherent dignity of human beings was the moral implications of human beings to respect others founded on the utilitarian belief that respect would be practiced in such a way as 'to increase the sum of human happiness' (Mill, 1988 p. 258).

A human being's dignity, as the object of a person's respect, is historically grounded as dependent on a person's capacity to reason and have a degree of autonomy (Sensen, 2011). This focus on dignity (based on personal autonomy) has implications not just for the respect due to oneself, but also the respect one must pay others. Balancing one's own autonomy and encroaching on the autonomy of others is the respect one accords oneself; one's self respect (Bird 2010, Roland and Foxx 2003). Therefore, self-respect has been conceived of by McKinnon (2000, p.493) as the effort required between how one views oneself and the person one intends to be, that would require 'congruence between a person's self-conception [how one sees oneself] and [their] self-expression'. It is the respect for oneself that can motivate a person to fully esteem the dignity and autonomy of others.

An individual's self-respect demands that they 'protest the violation of their rights and that they do so within the boundaries of dignity...[as] Dignity is the way in which individuals visibly demonstrate their humanity and their worthiness of respect. It is how self-respect is displayed to others' (Roland and Foxx, 2003, p.250). It is how this conception of respect is communicated through the educative process that is of concern to this study.

Respect and educative relationships

An educative relationship can be considered as the role of a teacher to promote the growth of their pupils (Blenkinsop, 2005; Lomax, 2000). Within such a relationship, the teacher would guide the specific learning experiences for their pupils (Frymier and Houser, 2000) which are not entirely directive as teachers cannot compel a pupil to learn as teachers 'never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment [they create]' (Dewey, 2004, p.18). This relationship is central to maintaining this environment as 'education is essentially a social process' (Dewey, 1998, p. 65). This educative relationship aims for a teacher to help their pupils achieve their greatest potential. A 'genuine educator' is one who has a concern for their pupils and considers 'the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives now and in his possibilities, what he can become' (Dewey, 1998, p. 65).

Educative relationships which are experienced between a teacher and her pupils are comparable to the many relationships people engage in to better understand each other (Frymier and Houser, 2000). This formation of social bonding between people helps to 'create a pattern in cognitive processing that gives priority to organising information on the basis of the person with whom one has some sort of connection' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.503). These bonds can help people to acquire a deeper mutual understanding, which can foster interpersonal relationships founded on mutual trust (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.503). Conversely 'dissimilar feelings and unequal involvement prevent the growth of trust and thereby thwart or weaken relationships' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.515). A person communicating with others affects their relationships with them (Hendrick and Hendrick, 2006). In an interpersonal relationship, the nature of the communication between people can help to encourage mutual understanding and develop trust that can nurture a deeper connection between them. Indeed, Mac Murray (2012, pp.669-670) commented on the "paradox of human nature": although we are born as human beings we must learn how to become human wherein the relational place of education is of paramount importance:

For this reason the first priority in education—if by education we mean learning to be human—is learning to live in personal relation to other people. Let us call it learning to live in community. I call this the first priority because failure in this is fundamental failure, which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity.

This type of connection can be fostered within teacher-pupil relationships to better enable communication and understanding (Frymier and Houser, 2000; Goldstein, 1999). Put simply, successful teaching 'means personal communication between teachers and [pupils] as well as expertise and effective delivery of

the content' (Frymier and Houser, 2000, p.217). The distinctive interpersonal relationship between a teacher and her pupils is where the 'two (main) differences in the teacher-[pupil] relationship are that it lacks the equality typically associated with friendship and has time constraints not typical of friendships', and, although there are substantial differences, 'they do not affect the basic functioning of communication in relationship development and maintenance' (Frymier and Houser, 2000, p.208). An educative relationship is principally inhibited by an absence of equality between the teacher and her students; yet, it must aim to produce a positive classroom environment for students that would enhance their learning. Lomax (2000) considered this type of relationship as a reciprocal development between a teacher and her pupils within a classroom. Lomax (2000, p.51) envisaged 'a direct relation without ritual... (and that) there will be learning and improvement (change) that involves both the self and others independently and reciprocally'. Frymier and Houser's study (2000, p.217), which examined the connection between interpersonal teacher-pupil relationships and communication skills, reported that 'when communication becomes interpersonal, individuals treat one another with greater respect and trust develops'. This interpersonal dimension of a teacher-pupil relationship can promote an atmosphere where teachers and pupils can communicate better within an atmosphere of greater trust and respect (O'Grady, 2015; O'Grady, Hinchion, and Mannix McNamara, 2011). This is especially significant within a prison education context.

Respect within prison education

Why is respect of distinctive importance for prison education? As argued by Wright (2004), prison education should aim to achieve caring educative relationships between teachers and pupils. An ethos of care in prison education can exist when 'there are signs of respectful behavior, and where this behavior is modeled and expected by all' (Wright, 2004, p.198). As care is rooted in an intention towards others, 'it is found in respectful actions on their behalf and by a general concern for their well-being' (Wright, 2004, p.201). This care is relational and for prison teachers requires 'a relational commitment that demands effort and accountability...and a sound knowledge of the delicate balance of self-other in helping, educative relationships' (Wright, 2004, p.201). These relations can help students see the efficacy of prison education by showing them their possibilities for the future: 'these relations help students respect themselves, their teachers and others in society' (Wright, 2004, p.201). However, these caring relations must have boundaries given the delicate power dynamics that are omnipresent in prisons (Wright, 2004, p.201.). Therefore 'most prison teachers face relational dilemmas and conflicts that arise because they must understand their students-get "close" or "near" enough to them in order to teach-while also keeping their emotional and social "distance" from them' (Wright, 2004, p.201). Hence they must gauge the relational midpoint of these interactions (Wright, 2004, p.201)

This primacy given to the place of respect within prison education is also exemplified in the work of Shobe (2003) in his survey of prisoners about respect and classroom management techniques. For prisoners, 'respect is very important to incarcerated adults and, consequently, can be used as a powerful motivator for controlling behavior in the classroom. Incarcerated adult students expect to be treated with respect and will give respect to others whom they believe deserve it' (Shobe, 2003, p.60). Within educative relationships in prison 'the teacher's skill in creating a classroom environment in which students feel non-threatened and motivated to learn is a key element in becoming a successful educator' as well as the fact that 'the student's respect toward the teacher and other students is a vital ingredient in the process of maintaining order within the classroom' (Shobe, 2003, p.60). Yet incarcerated adults may not have the capacity to express this respect to others, leaving the teacher in a position where they may not feel respected by their students because of this inability (Shobe, 2003, p.60). However, 'the perceptive teacher is one who takes the initiative to model respect to the students. The teacher in a correctional setting has an obligation to teach more than just the academic subjects' (Shobe, 2003, p.60). From this initiative to demonstrate respect students may reciprocate it (Shobe, 2003, p.60).

This interpersonal focus of prison education is also salient in an Irish context, as Warner (1998, p.120) discussed these challenges and cited the European Prison Rules whereby 'the prisoner's dignity is seen to be respected...and is allowed, as far as possible, scope to make choices and to seriously participate in shaping his or her life and activity within the prison'. Increasingly a myopic perspective of prisoners tends to dehumanise them and 'curtail' the rehabilitative capacities of prisons often obscuring the "whole person" within prison ed-

ucation (Costelloe and Warner 2014). In Ireland, the espoused interpersonal focus is exemplified through the Prison Education Service, which has the priorities to help prisoners 'i) cope with their sentences ii) to achieve personal development iii) to prepare for life after release iv) to establish the appetite and capacity for further education after release' (Costelloe and Warner 2014). Wright (2004, p.207) further explicated the need for care to be at the centre of prison teaching, asking 'Can we find examples of caring prisons which promote positive relationships of intimacy (but not quite), transparency (but not completely), and compassion?'

The need to explore issues of respect in a prison context is also articulated by Hulley, Liebling, and Crewe (2012, p.20) as 'respect is not a "sharp" construct with clear boundaries; it has blurred edges which merge into other key concepts such as honesty, fairness, trust and care... [and] More focused work is needed to refine these measures and explore more systematically the way respect 'works' in prison'. Therefore this research aimed to explore how respect was conceived of by young Irish people in prison and their teachers.

Methodology

The central research questions for this study were:-

- How is respect communicated between a teacher and a young Irish person in prison?
- How is respect perceived by a teacher and a young Irish person in prison?
- What is the significance of respect in the educational process within prison education?

Given the subjectivity of experiences that can shape an individual's understanding of respect as 'what one person claims as respectful may be viewed as disrespectful by another' (Goodman, 2009, p.4), a qualitative focus was adopted for this study. Qualitative research endeavours to understand the meaning individuals give to a phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and accept the subjective worldviews of human beings (Krauss, 2005). In addition, the dearth of research into the lived experience of prison education, due to an increasing neo-liberal approach to prison education internationally (Wacquant 2002), is well documented. This lack of research provides a greater need for a qualitative study of this nature. Interviews, rather than focus groups, were chosen as the primary method for this research as it more readily appreciates the anonymity of sensitive topics compared to focus groups and allows for the meanings attributed to a phenomenon to be elicited in a shared dialogue.

Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. Each is involved in meaning-making work. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge—treasures of information awaiting excavation—as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p.4)

One all-male young offenders institute in Ireland was chosen as a focus for this study of respect within prison education. This institution attended to the rehabilitative needs of individuals from the ages of 16 to 21 and had an education centre on site that, in keeping with Irish practice, was run by the local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) authority. Given the small number of young offender institutions in Ireland (there are currently four although this number has changed since the time this research was conducted in 2008) (IYJS, 2014) then any additional contextual information about the institution would possibly make it identifiable. Teachers and pupils were asked to volunteer after outlining the purpose of the research with 13 pupils and 13 teachers who agreed to participate. Given the sensitive ethical issues of researching young people, it was agreed to only approach the students who were over 18. Also, given the power dynamics of these institutions (Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti, and Santos 2005) a presentation was made to the staff and separately to the students with no explicit external pressure placed on the students to participate. The demographics of the teachers included 11 female teachers and 2 male teachers, all Irish natives with no racial variation. The age profile was restricted to protect the anonymity of participating teachers. The interviews lasted from approximately 30 minutes to an hour for both students and teachers. 15 questions were asked to each participant focusing on topics pertaining to their background, perceptions of respect, and the place of respect within

teaching and learning. All interviews were conducted in a private room to aid anonymity and to help place the participants in a more comfortable setting. In addition, no further information was requested from students pertaining to their time in prison, age, race, education level, etc. (unless volunteered) to appreciate the sensitive context that this research was conducted under.

Ethics

Given the delicacy of ethics for these institutions, care was taken to ensure all ethical protocols and frameworks were followed thoroughly. Ethical approval was given by both the Prisoner Based Research Ethics Committee (of the Irish Prison service) and the University's research ethics committee. The ethical procedures primarily addressed issues of anonymity, transparency, and power dynamics. The anonymity and ethical rights were assured with the pertinent information sheets and consent forms. All terms were explained to the participants at a suitable language and their rights were explicitly described to them. In addition, given the complications of acquiring parental consent, all participants of this study are between 18 and 21.

Data analysis

All of the interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher and read to identify themes and categories. The audio files of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher personally. Thematic data analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2000) was used as a framework whereby the researcher identified themes in the transcriptions and re-read the transcriptions numerous times to better ensure saturation of the data. These themes were identified inductively as emerging from the data rather than being applied as pre-conceived categories during the analysis. These themes were then grouped into categories to better shape their presentation.

Methodological limitations

One of the central limitations of conducting qualitative research with a vulnerable group of prisoners is the power dynamics, both of their voluntary contribution and the validity of the data they relay to a stranger. Efforts were made to ensure that the students did not feel uncomfortable and efforts to establish trust and a dialogue were also attempted by the researcher.

Findings

The findings of this study are discussed firstly in the institutional context of the school as expressed by both teachers and students. Following from this, the place of educative relationships and respect for both students and teachers are discussed, as well as its significance on teaching and learning within the institution. The names of participants have been changed and the notation "P" and "T" denote young pupil and teacher respectively. Questions asked by the researcher are italicised.

Context of study

Much of the respect, or disrespect, communicated by both teachers and students must be situated in the wider context of the prison and the socialising effects on both teachers and students. Understandably both students and teachers felt that the prison constrained their own sense of autonomy. For example, students largely described the institution in terms of an erosion of their autonomy through routine and ritual as 'it's just the same thing every day, day in day out' (Harold-P). This was compounded by the disrespectful treatment by the officers who many in the study ($n=6$) had very little respect for or felt disrespected often by them.

I've no respect for the officers in here [they] push you around telling you what to do all the time...bullies, that's all they are (Harold-P)

The officers in here treat you like dogs. They talk to you whatever way they want. There are only one or two that are respectful and the rest I do not pay heed to (Gavin-P)

In contrast, the school located within the institution was described as a positive influence on their experiences as a distraction from this routine and a productive outlet during their incarceration. 'It passes the time quicker, it flies through. Once you put the head down and do something' (Philip-P). Teachers also felt that the education offered in the school helped students cope with their sentences. 'If you look at the aims of prison

education the first aim is to help students to cope with their sentences...Education has different aims here and that is the first one, keeping them busy here and having something to occupy themselves with' (Jennifer-T). The teachers were also aware of the prioritisation of the prison rules as they also acknowledged the pragmatic realities of teaching in such an institution. One teacher identified ulterior motives for their involvement in education:

A lot of them are in school for reasons that have nothing to do with school, they are here because their pals are here, they think that there might be drugs over here, they're here because they want to steal food or because they're here so they can rob Biros, they're here because there are women over here and there are none over there. They're here for a million reasons that have nothing to do with education, if you can manage to squeeze in a bit of education into their agenda that's fine... It passes the time. (Joanne-T)

Teachers were not naive to the opportunistic nature of students or the rationale for a measure of socialisation within the prison. 'If there is a lot going on they will go to great lengths to take small things like a T-shirt or pritt stick, anything like that because all of those things might have a use in their cell...The more you try and take away the more they will try and steal, they are very opportunistic and you must never forget that' (Patricia-T). However, they understood the priorities of the institution in safeguarding the prisoners. For example, one teacher described an incident: 'after the junior cert there recently I brought some of the parents in and had some tea and sandwiches ...and we found out that some of them had put pressure on their parents to bring in drugs, so you can see why we are on their [institution's] side' (Greg-T).

The politics of the prison environment were specifically cited by teachers as inhibiting their autonomy and constraining their capacity to trust the institution. 'The politics here is outrageous...and that is very frustrating because it's such a big institution there is nothing you can do about it, although you can do is work the best as you can within it ... Just the egos and the personalities and the politics' (Jennifer-T). Another example of the decreased autonomy and powerlessness was given by a teacher whereby credit for initiative was often appropriated by those in a greater position of power.

I think the worst thing here is the lack of power... you have to hand control over to someone else, like I mentioned about organising plays and art exhibitions and they make life so difficult in getting the people. And when it comes to the exam results the governor is there taking all the credit for the institution doing it. So on the night of the play they will be the ones with the drinks and the cheese and the Minister [of Justice] in and the person who produced it is put away. So if you can accept that and the work under those conditions then that's fine. (Greg-T)

However, in contrast to students' experiences of bullying and the cynical attitude by some staff about the institution, a large proportion of the students and teachers spoke about the positive relationships, and respect, they experienced in the school.

Educative relationships

From the teachers' perspective, they spoke of their relationships with students as communicating respect and esteem for each other. The teachers largely (n=9) spoke of these relationships positively and described them as respectful. This relational esteem was felt to exalt the more human components of prison education. For example, one teacher who had taught in a nearby prison (at the same time as the young offenders' institution) met students who had come through this institution years earlier. The students would 'have very fond memories of their time here' but as they were teenagers at the time they had 'to be sullen, they can't show joy...they kind of have to think "come on we're teenagers and we have to pull that sullen mask down"' (Mary-T). She believed that the students' recollection of enjoying the school was based on the relationships they established within the school.

I think that the best thing about being a teacher in a prison, and I think that we are very lucky here with most of the teachers, is that we have a really good relationship between the teachers and pupils. I don't think it matters how brilliant the teacher is at teaching their subject, I think it matters, the good relationship you have with the students (Mary-T).

This interpersonal contact was distinctive within the institution as teachers in young offenders' institutions and prisons are not employed by the Department of Justice in Ireland (such as the other supports available for the students from the counsellors and psychologists). Therefore the teachers were not viewed by the students as part of the formal correctional system and therefore more open to establish equal relationships. For example, one teacher stated:-

I'm the human contact that they have and from the outside which they value very much, I am not employed by justice, none of the teachers here are. We are employed by the VEC [Vocational Educational Committee]. We are the only true people who are not employed by the prison. The doctor, the nurse and the priest are paid by [The Department of] justice but we are not, we are paid by the VEC. We are outside and it's something that we take as being important, the prisoners may not be able to articulate that but it is very important to them (Greg-T)

From both teachers' and students' perspectives, any attempts to acknowledge the humanity of the pupil also helped promote a more respectful relationship. For students, examples such as engaging in an informal dialogue or a teacher's genuine attention to a pupil's life was also perceived to be respectful: 'they'd talk to you about the weather or sports or what we got up to over the weekend in the yard or how things are going for you' (Harold-P) and 'by coming in greeting you and saying "Brian, how are you?" and they will say "are you in the humour to work?" and I will say "Yes" and then we go to work' (Brian-P). Teachers also believed that certain practices were perceived as respectful by students such as enquiring into the lives of students and being interested in them. 'I would think I show respect by always using their names, I would always ask them about themselves or where they are from ... I suppose that would be my way of showing my interest in them as an individual and respecting who they are' (Diane-T). Equally they believed that pupils communicated respect to them by being mannered and pleasant. 'Honestly I am surprised at how good they can be. I came in here expecting them to be disrespectful and they have been very pleasant...Respect would come when they say thank you for things or say things like "could you pass me the ruler please?''' (Lorraine-T).

Interpersonal respect between teachers and pupils

Reciprocity was an issue linked with respect for both pupils and students. For pupils, the relational significance of their teachers (as respect within it) was highly regarded by them: 'if you did not get on with them then you would not be in the class. It is mutual respect between us and the teachers. You have to respect them because they are taking the time to come in and see you. They show you that respect back as well' (Howard-P). Students who described prison education as a very positive experience also felt the need to reciprocate any respect they felt from teachers. For example, one participant specifically cited the interpersonal qualities of the teachers as contributing to this: 'they help me. I mean I could barely read before I came in here and one of the teachers taught me how to read eventually, now I can read perfect' (Harold-P). Pupils even felt protective of teachers they had built a respectful relationship with.

If the guards were shouting at them we wouldn't let anything like that go on. ...For an instance there a couple of months ago they were slaggin' off one of the teachers, and he's an old fella you know what I mean. I turned around and I was on the phone and I hung up my phone call and I said to him "don't you go starting on him!" (Harold-P)

For teachers, they also described reciprocity as central in the promotion of a respectful climate. 'I think if I show them respect and I feel that it is reciprocated and I think it is very important to start with that and not forget to do it because sometimes you can get complacent about these things but they are hugely important' (Diane-T). However, some teachers did feel that pupils would be able to display a veneer of respect that might not be authentic: 'they know how to appear like they do... The school is voluntary and they know that they are not welcome in the class unless they show respect so they certainly know how to give the appearance' (Jennifer-T).

In addition to reciprocity, a sense of greater autonomy was particularly prized by students as a charac-

teristic of a respectful teacher: ‘choice is everything. Sometimes I will say to them that “I will not work today” and I’ll tell the teacher and they will say “no problem”’ (Brian-P). This was also articulated by students as the difference between being told and being asked as ‘if you are pushed into something then you are not going to do it’ (Howard-P). The teachers also agreed that greater autonomy had a significant benefit for the students as they were able to choose their subjects. Indeed, one teacher stated ‘a big thing for me is that I want them to feel that they are making their own decisions all the time because I think that is something that is taken away from them here’ (Diane-T). Allowing them choices, and providing greater autonomy, during discipline issues was ‘showing respect because you are actually giving them a choice that they mightn’t have had previously... If you are calm and you allow them the choice to change, they do, they show you respect in return and there maybe the odd time where they don’t get what they want, but if you explain to them why they didn’t get it, it can turn the situation around’ (Moira-T).

A greater sense of autonomy for pupils also implied a greater level of accountability as consistent and clear boundaries between the teachers and the students were often described as maintaining a respectful relationship. ‘I think it is about how you conduct yourself in your class and that you have boundaries where to draw the line, what you are going to accept and what you are not going to accept’ (Moira-T). In contrast some teachers were felt to be disrespectful by pupils primarily through a lack of maintaining authority ‘old John’s ones [classes] are bad though, no one respects him, they just run amok in his class you know...he is easily led, he doesn’t put his foot down and say stop messing or anything’ (Philip-P).

The equal application of boundaries and accountability of pupils was also frequently mentioned by teachers. Communicating to pupils that there was no discrimination between them, or judgement of their crimes, was central to the practice of respect for most of ($n=5$) the teachers. ‘Here they are in for all sorts of different crimes... But you treat everyone the same’ (Aoife-T). Specific mention was made by students of teachers being respectful if they helped the students, viewing the students more as equals, with a measure of flexibility. The students described respectful teachers who ‘helped me with my reading and writing and all’ (Joseph-P) and ‘they don’t talk down to you, they will ask you to do something and if you are not in the humour they will not give out to you’ (Brian-P). Acts of rudeness or perceived acts of unequal treatment were often ($n=3$) felt by pupils to be disrespectful and elicited disrespectful actions. For example, one pupil gave the example of unequal treatment by a teacher:-

I was only doing the washing-up, and I said “Miss I have to go and use the phone” as it was 10 to 12, but she said “no you had to do the dishes” and there were two boys sitting down doing nothing and I had to wash the dishes like a fool. So I said “listen I am going out to use the phone” and she goes “well then this is your last class” and “I said f*** you, stick your class up your hole you fat tramp” and I walked out. (Neil-P)

Educative significance of respect

The educative significance of respect for both teachers and pupils will be discussed separately to help distinguish the differences each held in the communication of respect. For teachers, the cultivation of trust and empowerment grounded in a care for their pupils was their core value as educators. An extension of this was felt by students, who also said that greater educative empowerment helped them to respect themselves.

Educative significance: the teachers’ perspective. The teachers perceived respect as contributing to the educative potential of prison education. They described respect as cultivating trust with students by helping them to greater achievement. This gave the students the capacity to respect themselves more. One teacher cited the respect shown by students when they trusted her and displayed their vulnerability as learners: ‘they might even ask you how to spell something which for me is a big statement as they are putting their trust in you to a degree or showing you their own vulnerability’ (Lorraine-T). This trust was especially prized, as another teacher felt it was so hard to attain. ‘And they tell you so much, I mean I’m amazed at the trust they have, I mean they don’t know me from a hole in the ground’ (Mary-T).

For many teachers ($n=7$), respect for themselves emerged from observing their students achieve their own goals. One teacher gave the example of a student who had an inauspicious beginning as ‘after one class he told me to “go and f*** myself” so I said fine’. A year or so later ‘he approached me again this year and he said that he wanted to do his junior cert and ...nearly every day was a challenge but on the day of the exam...

he managed to be relaxed and do some really, really beautiful drawings so I told him that I was very proud of him, that was a good moment for me' (Diane-T). Another teacher organised her cooking students to prepare Christmas meals for charity where they were allocated varying responsibilities 'so the boys served it up and they felt very proud of themselves. When you give them that ability to feel proud or to achieve anything and it happens very regularly on small occasions, that is good' (Patricia-T). Other teachers had similar stories about their sense of self respect as a teacher being achieved by promoting a sense of self respect in their students. 'There is a guy who has a degree from Open University after 10 years suffering from chronic alcoholism and now he is a changed man... He now has respect for himself and has an education' (Peter-T).

For most teachers, their decision to undertake teaching in a prison often (n=8) emerged from their desire to make a difference. This desire was grounded in a more holistic perception of the purpose of education. When asked "*what would you like your teaching legacy to be from here?*" often (n=5) the reply was 'to make a difference to a few people at least. Do you know when you hear people talk about this great teacher that they remember from school, to be one of those' (Jennifer-T) or 'that I made a difference to the students and that they learnt' (Anne-T).

The teachers appeared to be very aware of the hardships the students have undergone, which influenced how the teachers treated them. One experienced teacher had particular insights into the lives of students and was humbled by 'their lack of any anger towards things ...as they're lives for a vast majority of them are s***'. The following examples illustrate some of the traumatic experiences undergone by some of the students that this teacher was made aware of during her numerous years teaching in the school. Hearing about these experiences motivated her to respect them:

His mother was a drug addict and she wasn't let into a lot of hostels, but he wouldn't leave his mother, so for six months he was sleeping in a skip and going to a back lane hostel getting a shower and going off to work, he was only 17 at the time. (Mary-T)

Another young fella was here last week and he said he didn't like his mother at all... [as she] blamed the boys for the dad leaving. When he was 6 he robbed something small out of a shop and his mother said "you're going to end up like your father", so she tied him to a chair in his underpants and she pulled the plug out of the television and she beat him for an hour with the plug of the television. Even at 19 he had all these scars on his arm but nobody intervened to take them into care and he said the lives they had were just hell on earth. (Mary-T)

Educative significance: the students' perspective. Students also felt that respect had educative significance within their prison, particularly if it contributed to their sense of empowerment and greater respect for themselves. For students, respect was described as a significant aspect of teaching and learning that helps to motivate and promote greater co-operation. 'It gives you that extra bit of encouragement' (Gavin-P) and 'If they talk down to you then you will not give them respect and so you will just mess or throw things around the classroom' (Brian-P). Education was described by some (n=4) as an aspect of prison that helped them to respect themselves. 'You need an education as being streetwise isn't going to get you a job' (Harold-P) and 'I'm doing it for myself, I would like to have my leaving cert. A few of my friends have it and it is not even just for a job, it is just that I wanted to have a leaving cert. and say that I have finished school...Just to say that I have finished something' (Howard-P) and 'I don't do any subjects, like I don't do the junior cert or anything. I just do the classes, I just like the learning, you learn new things every day' (Philip-P). For several (n=4), this sense of self-respect was a greater capacity to better enact their values in their role as a father after prison.

Say you have a kid or something and he's going through school and he'll need help with the work and you're as dumb as two planks with no education. I mean you'd be lost and they'd be looking at you and you're saying "go ask your mother" and you don't want be that sort of father ... I grew up with my father being in prison. (Harold-P)

The only reason I am doing it [education] is to get out and see my kids. My main priority is before I get out I wanted to get some social housing outside of Ballymun that is the problem. There is too much s*** going on out there at the moment and I do not want to be involved. I wanted to stay away from it as it is always me that ends up in here ...I will be in here for the best years of my life (Gavin-P)

Discussion

Within the findings, the socialised nature of the students' relationships with their teachers emerged as a salient issue. The reproduction of socialised practices amongst prisoners is well documented (Carrigan, 2015) and the consistency of interpersonal engagement is required to feel cared for and to build trust with others (Noddings, 1992). Indeed, Strang (2015) also supported a compassionate focus of prison education, and the place of prison education to act against the increasing dehumanisation of mass incarceration has also been well argued (Stern 2014). This socialising aspect of education has been described by MacMurray (2012) as 'learning to be human' and a central component of the purpose of education:

Perhaps in our day it is the inhumanity of man that we feel most keenly, and that conditions our generation to cynicism and hopelessness. It is this same paradox from which both the necessity and the sense of education is derived. We are born human, and nothing can rob us of our human birthright. Nevertheless, we have to learn to be human, and we can only learn by being taught (p.666).

This is not to state that young Irish people in prison are any less human than others but that those within prison education are possibly most in need of this aspect of education. It is this "learning to be more human" that MacMurray (2012) espoused that is a fundamental aspect of the rehabilitative process. This issue of reciprocity within respectful relationships, as often cited by both teachers and students, was also highlighted by MacMurray (2012, pp.669-670) as a central construct in how we learn to be more human.

The first principle of human nature is mutuality. 'There can be no man,' said Confucius, 'until there are two men in relation.' In a more modern idiom we might say that 'a person is always one term in a relation of persons.' This principle, that we live by entering into relation with one another, provides the basic structure within which all human experience and activity falls, whether individual or social.

His additional insistence that "inhumanity is precisely the perversion of human relations" (MacMurray 2012, p.670) has significance for those within incarceration as, arguably, they should be provided with greater supports to develop their relational capacities.

Within these reciprocal relationships reported by participants, autonomy also emerged as a central facet of interpersonal respect for students. This is also not surprising, as articulated by one teacher, as so much freedom has been removed that any choice given to the students is appreciated. Teachers believed that asking, and giving freedom to, students was a way of communicating respect. Autonomy as a feature of respect is discussed by Bagnoli (2007):

As the experience of autonomy, respect is twofold: it is the experience of being free and at the same time it is the experience of being constrained by the recognition of others as having equal standing. While autonomy is a quality of the will, it is also something that we acquire and practice always in relations with others as peers (p.120).

Darwall (2006, p.12) cited this appreciation of another's autonomy within the practice of respect as analogous to Hobbe's distinction between "command" and "counsel". However, as liberty may be regarded as "the luxury of self-discipline" (Cooke, 1973, p.388) then greater autonomy implies greater accountability. The need for consistent boundaries (as described by the teachers within this study), and the lack of respect felt by students for those teachers who did not maintain them, highlights the significance of teacher accountability

within respect to hold students to these boundaries. This accountability to oneself and one's values, professional or otherwise, can be regarded as a sense of self-respect.

Although teachers espoused the need to respect themselves (through the need to be committed to their students and maintain boundaries) students also described the place of prison education to enhance their sense of self-respect (for example as fathers or as an opportunity for growth). Although teachers can help to empower students, it is the student's capacity to hold themselves accountable and grow through their own efforts that promotes a sense of self-respect. In this regard, self-respect can be regarded as a rehabilitative process for young Irish people in prison through which they acquire greater dignity and esteem. This appears to be largely founded on the respectful interactions they have with their teachers within educative relationships.

Limitation and scope for further study

The most obvious limitations of this study is the voluntary selection of students as well as a possible reticence to disclose to a stranger issues of disrespect within the institution where trust could only be established within the interview. In addition, the findings of this study are based on a relatively small population of students, which inhibits the generalizability of these findings. There were also no previous studies of a qualitative nature in this context exploring respect to build on for this work, so its aim was exploratory. Given the importance of socialisation and educative relationships within prison education, as well as respect within these relationships, further studies are needed into the varying practices of respect within the international community of prison education.

Conclusion

Three main issues appeared from this study: the relational significance of respect as improved socialisation (and by extension societal norms); the place of both autonomy and accountability as essential components of a respectful relationship; and the place of self-respect within the rehabilitative process for prison education. The lack of guidance for students in the social norms and insecurity of their relational practices that was apparent within this study points to the need to prioritise the relational aspect of education within prison education. To better implement these reciprocal educative relationships, a sense of greater autonomy should be given to students. This greater autonomy will help them to feel respected, but also feel the need to be held suitably accountable for their actions to reinforce this autonomy. It also appears that teachers' values are at the heart of their motivation to respect themselves and convey a respect in pupils that would reciprocate respect to them and develop a sense of greater dignity and growth.. In this way, respect is conceived as an important relational practice and not simply a tool to improve classroom management as espoused by Shobe (2003).

Although a small scale study, the recommendations from this research include exploring the values and motivations of prison educators,, encouraging greater empathy for the lives of incarcerated individuals, offering consistent boundaries that hold both the teacher and pupils suitably accountable, and promoting autonomy in the pupils' learning experiences.

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